



CITY NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**** Media Advisory ****

Police Focus on Underage Drinking

Wichita Police Officers will be conducting a series of special assignments that focus on underage drinking and are designed to help keep youth safe during proms and graduations and other social events that occur at area high schools and colleges during the spring months.

The special assignments, which include both education and enforcement, will be conducted throughout the city of Wichita. The educational and enforcement activities are being made possible by a \$23,000 Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws (EUDL) grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation.

With the EUDL funding, the Wichita Police Department will be able to cover personnel costs to run the special operations to combat underage drinking. The assignments will be multi-faceted, including aspects of compliance checks, third party sales interdiction and party patrols.

This is the third year the Wichita Police Department has received an EUDL grant. In 2004 and 2005, the Department made 964 underage alcohol-related arrests, as well as 399 DUI arrests of offenders under the legal drinking age.

The EUDL funding was awarded to the Department for its Juvenile Underage Drinking Group Education/Enforcement (JUDGE) program, which was implemented eight years ago. The program came to fruition after Officers in the Patrol West Bureau noticed a sharp increase in the number of calls they were making that involved juveniles and alcohol. In response to this problem, they formed a coalition with representatives from the court system, public and private

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education, regional prevention, victim support groups, local businesses and the liquor industry. This group developed the JUDGE program that utilizes a holistic approach designed to bring a combination of problem solving skills, education and traditional enforcement efforts to address the issue of underage drinking.

According to Officer Mike Lloyd, the JUDGE program has been very successful in making the community aware of the issues associated with underage drinking through a multi-faceted approach of education and enforcement. In December of 2005 a meeting was held to revitalize the JUDGE Coalition within the city of Wichita. Approximately 25 people representing private schools, concerned parents, other Law Enforcement agencies and the liquor industry were present and displayed a willingness to be involved with the JUDGE coalition.

“Though we continue to address the issue of underage drinking, it is still a problem. Statistics show that 65 percent of youth obtain their alcohol from someone they know, and the average age of someone’s first drink is 13-years-old,” said Officer Lloyd.

The JUDGE program provides educational materials to area high school students and local retailers that depict the dangers of underage consumption of alcoholic beverages. The program also includes an enforcement aspect, citing businesses and/or individuals who provide alcoholic beverages to underage persons, and citing juveniles in possession of such beverage.

For further information concerning the EUDL grant or the JUDGE program, contact Officer Mike Lloyd at Patrol East at 688-9300 or 688-9545.